

March 10, 2015

Education Committee

Re: S.B. No. 1054 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA.

Members of the Education Committee,

I am writing to express my support of S.B. No. 1054. As a parent of a student with Dyslexia, I know first-hand the lasting and cumulative impact that a failure to detect and effectively remediate this complex learning style has on the development of the child. In an effort to help as many other students learn to read I have since become an Orton-Gillingham teacher. As an Orton-Gillingham teacher, I use my training every day to prove to my students that they are bright and more than capable of becoming successful learners because they have been convinced by those around them that they are not worthy of the investment of time and attention, having been pre-judged that they are lazy or incapable of learning. This could not be farther from the truth. Some of *the most Dyslexic* students are in fact some of the brightest because they are able to think in ways that a typical learner cannot.

In truth, these students do not suffer a disability because they have Dyslexia. Their disability truly lies in the inability of those professional individuals responsible for their education to recognize the signs of Dyslexia and to design an adequate teaching approach that will maximize learning based on the neurology of the Dyslexic brain.

When my daughter began to struggle in school I trusted that the training that the professional teachers on our team had received would positively impact the situation and ameliorate the difficulties that she was having. Year after year, as the situation deteriorated to a point where I was no longer able to recognize that confident, bright, curious kindergartner that I put on the bus the first day, I began to wonder if my expectations had been unrealistic. I would sit at a PPT and hear comments such as “she guesses words, so she is impulsive.” I provided information that there was a strong family history of Dyslexia in our family as well as a medical history of many recurrent ear infections (which, I later learned, interferes with early acquisition of an awareness of sound recognition a precursor to language and reading proficiency). Reading assessments would be recommended by members of the PPT that were *specially trained* in Special Education and then I would learn that they had nothing to do with any of the 5 foundational areas of reading. I would point to a lack of recognition of letters and their sounds during times of dictated writing or recurrent letter reversals, or an inability to ‘find’ the appropriate word in conversation and none of these factors were recognized by anyone on the team as an indication that there might be a reading disability. These were all opportunities that altered the path of my daughter’s life and affected her to the point of changing her as a person.

At no time was there a reading specialist appointed to our PPT team until I requested the PPT appoint one.

As a society, given all that we now know about the Dyslexic brain, we must continually seek to reverse the perception by our education professionals that these individuals are 'unteachable'. This is something that I knew about my child all along but had to fight for to prove that she was worthy of consideration. The continued failure to appropriately identify and successfully remediate students with Dyslexia should be considered nothing short of neglectful and I am in support of any effort to resolve this issue.

I would like to share a few concerns. The ability to effectively remediate the difficulties that a severely Dyslexic student may be facing does not only depend on a certain number of 'credits' in a course. The teaching experience that has been most valuable to me has been the Practicum teaching model in which I have worked directly under an extremely experienced and knowledgeable Orton-Gillingham practitioner. As every Dyslexic learner has particular educational needs, the practicum teaching model is critical to being able to design a lesson plan that is most meaningful for that individual student. This could not be done without supervision and guidance from an individual that has been highly trained in the remediation of Dyslexia. An additional concern is that we must understand that once a Dyslexic student is successfully taught to read, they can not be considered 'cured' of Dyslexia. Many continue to suffer lower processing speeds or working memory issues which DO NOT interfere with their ability to think at a high level, but only interfere in performing these tasks based on an 'arbitrary' measure of time. Therefore, Dyslexic students will always need the continued support of accommodations in order to level their performance abilities.

For the above reasons, I am in support of [S.B. No. 1054](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING STUDENTS WITH DYSLEXIA and my most sincere hope is that you will join me in the support of these deserving individuals by voting in favor of this bill.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Bankoski

Email: Cindy.bankoski@comcast.net